

DEC - 1 2004

Superior Clipping Service

Glendive MT 406-377-6612



2031620

40

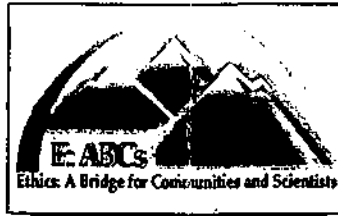
High-risk population members should take precautions with health

As you know Libby has a special high risk population that we all need to help protect. People who have a compromised respiratory system, such as those who have been diagnosed with asbestosis, run a significant risk of complications if they are exposed to an infection such as the flu.

There are more than a few good reasons to declare war on germs, according to microbiologist, Chuck Gerba, a member of the research team conducting a recent study at the University of Arizona. Did you know that the kitchen sink has more bacteria in it than your garbage can or even your toilet? Or that the average phone at your office is covered with more germs than the doorknob of a public restroom?

There are things people can do to avoid the flu even if they aren't able to get a flu vaccination. For instance, simply washing your hands correctly and often. We generally consider ourselves to have good hygiene but research shows as many as 50 percent of Americans don't wash their hands before leaving the restroom. Of the remaining 50 percent many don't wash their hands correctly. A common misconception is that the flu is spread by airborne bacteria when in fact 80 percent of infections are spread through hand contact.

The proper way to wash your hands is to briskly rub them together with warm soapy water for 10-15 seconds or about the time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song. Then rinse well



and dry your hands thoroughly. It's important to wash your hands often! Not only after going to the bathroom, but before preparing food and just before you eat. This is especially important when someone in your household is sick.

Antibacterial hand sanitizers are useful for those times when water is not readily available. They can reduce bacteria and viruses by 99.9 percent.

Scientists also recommend routinely disinfecting surfaces that are frequently touched in your home or at work. Light switches, doorknobs and faucets are a haven for bacteria, so clean them thoroughly and often. This won't entirely prevent the transmission of germs which can live anywhere from several hours to several weeks on these surfaces, but disinfecting will at least slow them down. Disinfectant wipes are a good idea for wiping down the grocery cart handle in the grocery store. The cart handles are ranked four out of 10 grimmest places, next is public restrooms and children's playgrounds come in at the bottom of the list being "germiest" of all.

Avoid public gatherings if possible, even if you aren't sick. If you cough, cough into a tissue rather than a cloth hankie, or

into your sleeve at the crook of your elbow as a last resort. One last thing, stay home if you are sick and don't send the kids to school sick.

Helen Clarke works for Ethics: A Bridge for Communities and Scientists (E:ABCs) with the University of Montana in partnership with the Center for Asbestos Related Disease. E:ABCs is supported by a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). For more information visit their website,

www.umt.edu/libby/health or call Helen Clarke in Libby at 293-9274 or Dixie McLaughlin at the University of Montana at 243-6824. The E:ABCs project is charged with disseminating research information to the community of Libby so they may be aware of current developments taking place in the scientific world in relation to asbestos-related disease. There are a series of articles planned for future publication: "How to Boost Your Immune System," then three articles describing the various studies being conducted by researchers on Libby asbestos at the University of Montana's Center for Environmental Health Sciences. The "Immune Responses to Environmental Insults," research by Jean Pfau, Ph.D., "The Role of Genetic Variability in Susceptibility to Environmental Insult," research by Liz Putnam, Ph.D., and "Mesothelioma Genetics," research by Mark Pershouse, Ph.D.